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Submission:

Please find attached a submission from Burdekin Shire Council to the Queensland Redistribution Commission.



Burdekin
Shire Council

Our Region, Our Voice

Protecting the Burdekin Electorate and Rural Representation in Queensland

A message from the Mayor

As Mayor of Burdekin Shire Council, I am proud to present this submission to the Queensland Redistribution Commission on behalf of our community.

The Burdekin region is defined by its strong rural identity, longstanding agricultural industry and close-knit communities. Our electorate is more than a boundary on a map. It represents the unique character of this region, our shared way of life and the importance of fair and effective representation for people in rural North Queensland.

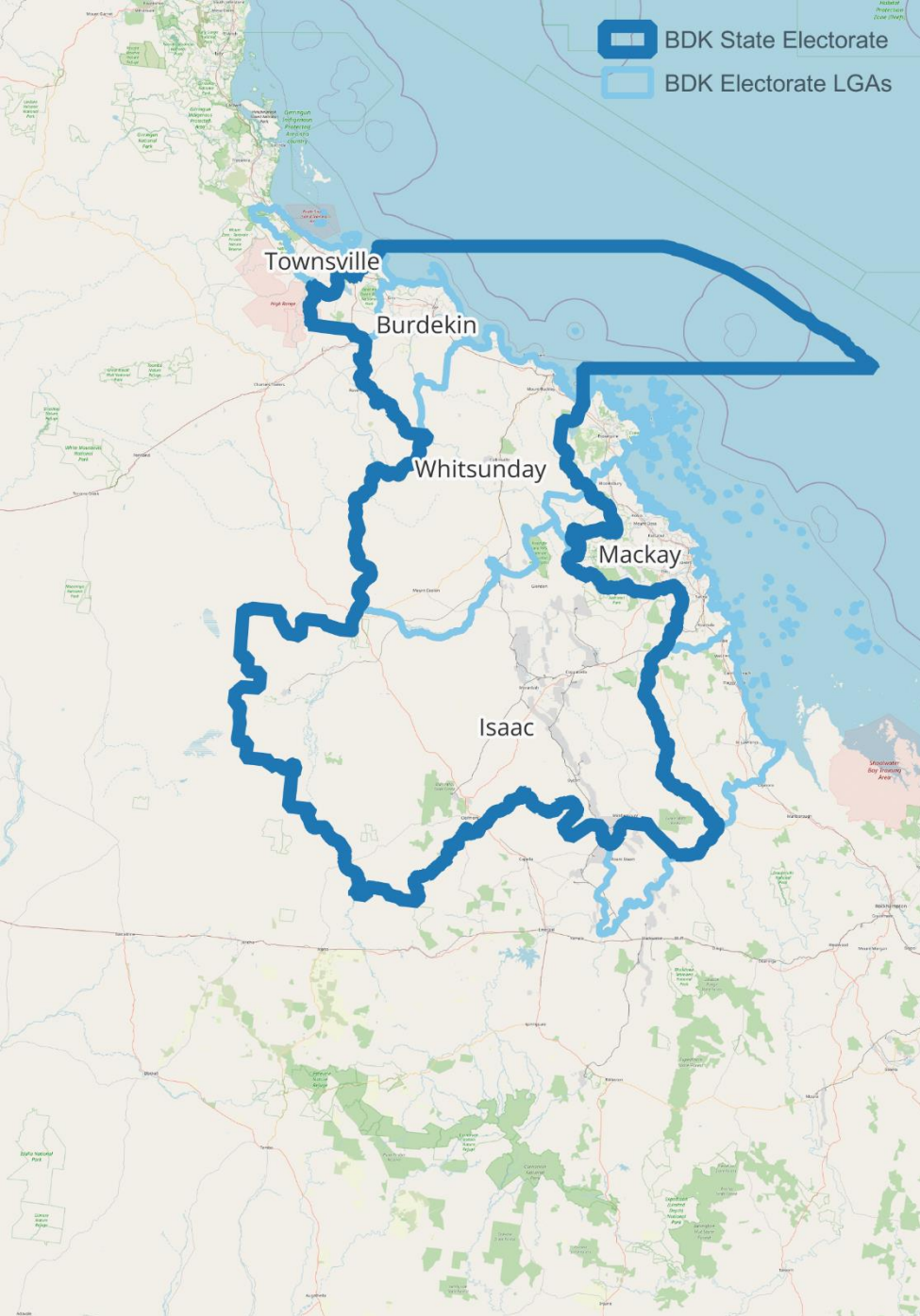
Our submission clearly demonstrates that, contrary to long-term projections, population stability and economic growth are being realised across our region. Importantly, the electorate reflects a strong community of interest, supported by longstanding networks in health, education, emergency services and industry.

Altering the Burdekin electorate risks disrupting these connections and diminishing the representation of rural and regional Queenslanders. We urge the Commission to maintain the existing boundaries and ensure that the people of the Burdekin continue to have a clear and united voice in our Parliament.

On behalf of Burdekin Shire Council and our broader community, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important process.



Pierina Dalle Court
Mayor
Burdekin Shire Council



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Our Electorate

A Growing Region

Our electorate is growing

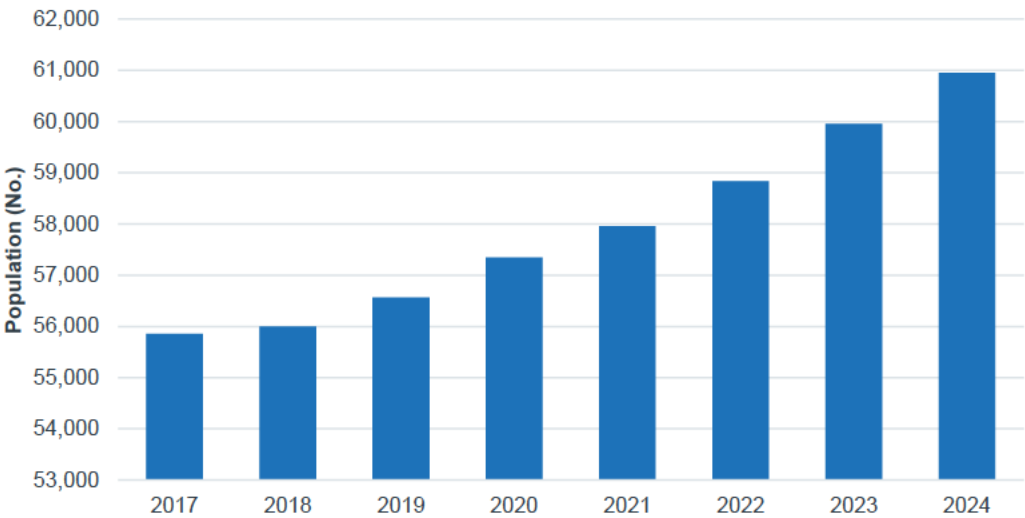
The Burdekin electorate, situated in the heart of North Queensland, is a vital rural region known for its strong agricultural base, particularly sugar cane farming, alongside thriving horticulture, manufacturing, cattle, mining and renewable energy industries.

The electorate's population has grown at a rate of 1.3% from 2017 to 2024, slightly trailing Queensland's average growth of 1.8%. This population increase supports the notion that the electorate remains within manageable growth expectations.

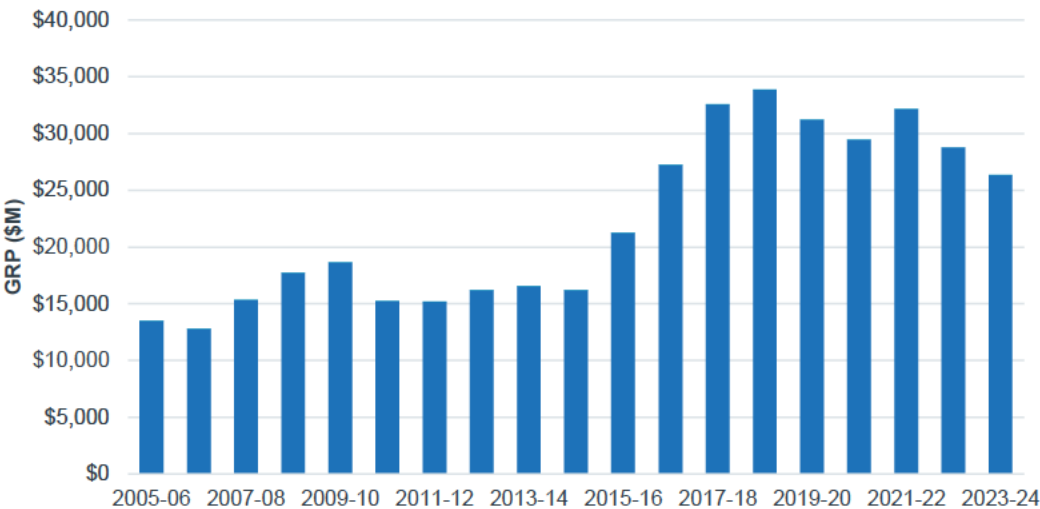
Alongside this, the economy continues to show resilience, with key sectors such as agriculture (primarily sugar cane), mining and manufacturing driving growth. The GRP data reveals a consistent contribution across various sectors.

With stable population growth and a significant contribution to the state's GRP, maintaining the current boundaries will preserve the electorate's strong community identity and ensure continued economic development.

The data relating to the Burdekin electorate are based on SA2 information, which does not align directly with the State electorate boundaries.



Source: ABS (2025 a).

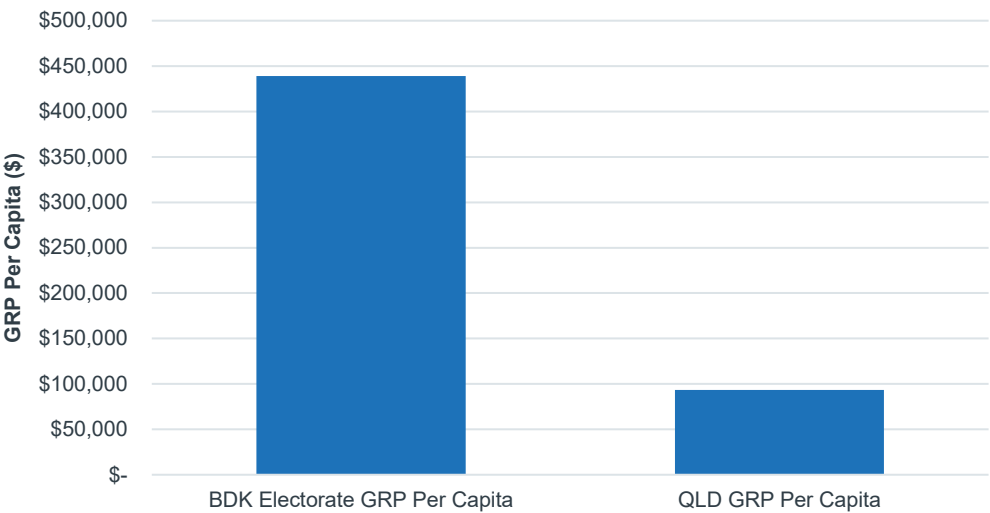


Source: AEC (Unpublished).

We support the state

The Burdekin electorate's GRP per capita of \$438,914 far surpasses the Queensland average of \$93,525. This highlights Burdekin's economic strength, driven by high-output industries like agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Despite its smaller population, the electorate generates substantial economic value, making it a key contributor to the state's economy.

Preserving the Burdekin electorate is crucial to maintaining this strong economic performance. The region's unique industries and high GRP per capita underscore its importance and the need for focused representation in Queensland Parliament. Retaining the current boundaries ensures continued economic growth and the vitality of thriving sectors.



Source: ABS (2025 a), AEC (Unpublished).

The data relating to the Burdekin electorate are based on SA2 information, which does not align directly with the State electorate boundaries.

Growth in the Burdekin Shire

To demonstrate why the Burdekin electorate must be retained in its current form, we now present local data from the Burdekin Shire Council area.

These insights highlight the region's growing population, economic resilience and strategic importance, factors that support the case for maintaining existing boundaries.

Similar trends are also observed across our neighbouring LGA's in the Burdekin electorate.



Our Region's Growth

Population & Approvals



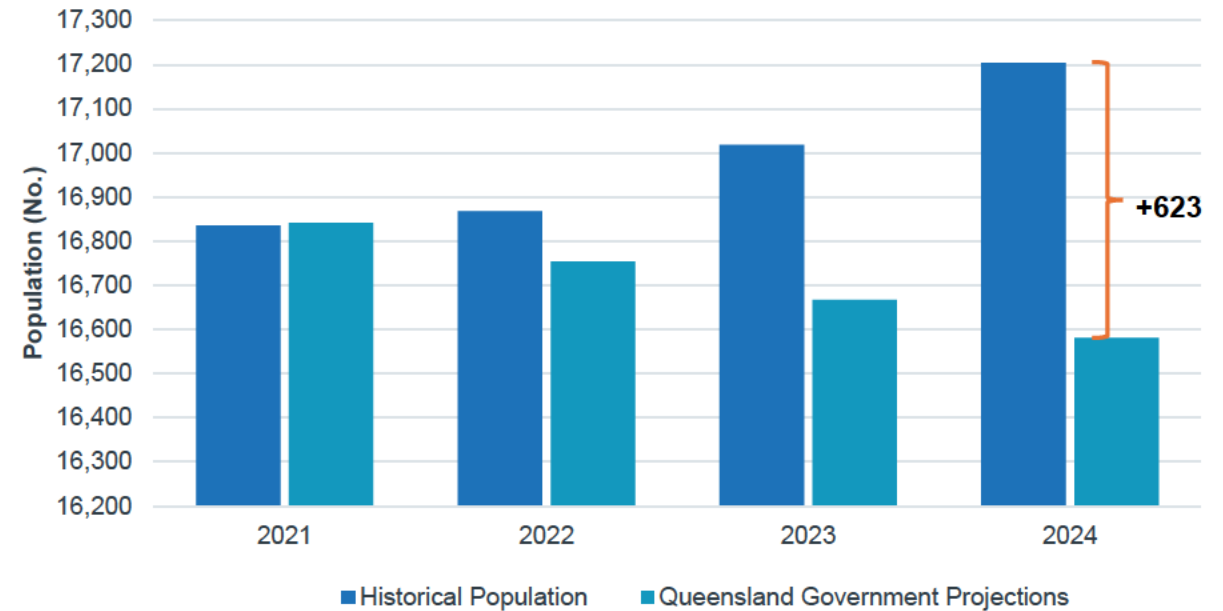
Population trends have changed

Despite earlier projections of decline, the Burdekin Local Government Area (LGA) is now experiencing population growth.

From 2021 to 2024, the population increased from 16,836 to 17,204, equating to 1.0% annual growth. This directly contrasts with the Queensland Government's forecast of a 0.5% decline over the same period.

This reversal demonstrates that previous assumptions no longer reflect current conditions. It reinforces the need to treat long-term projections with caution when re-considering electoral boundaries, especially where observed data shows stability or recovery.

Our region is growing steadily, challenging projections and supporting the case to retain current electoral boundaries.



Source: ABS (2025 a), QGSO (2023).

Approvals are accelerating

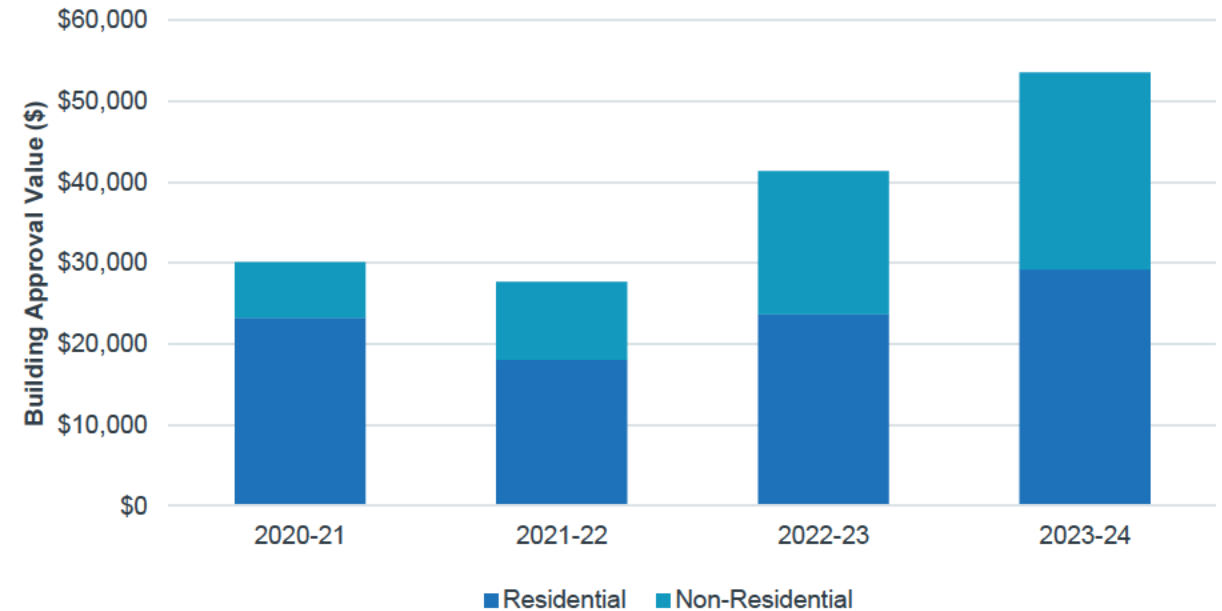
The Burdekin LGA is experiencing a significant rise in building activity, reinforcing signs of population stability and local confidence.

Burdekin recorded \$29.2 million in residential building approvals in 2023-24, an increase of 25.6% (or \$6.0 million) compared to 2020-21. In comparison, Queensland only increased its residential building approvals by 17.6% over the same period.

Non-residential building approvals in Burdekin have increased even more sharply, rising from \$6.9 million in 2020-21 to \$24.3 million in 2023-24, a jump of 253.5%. This growth is significantly higher than Queensland, which achieved a 72.6% growth over the same period.

This significant investment reflects growth in public infrastructure, commercial activity and regional development projects that support future population and economic resilience.

These trends demonstrate clear momentum in the region.



Source: ABS (2025 b).

A large blue steel truss bridge spans a wide river. The bridge has multiple concrete piers supporting its structure. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds from the setting or rising sun, casting a warm glow over the scene. The water reflects the bridge and the sky. Lush green trees and vegetation are visible along the riverbanks.

Our Major Projects

Ongoing Investment

Projects completed and under construction

A range of significant projects are contributing to growth and confidence across the Burdekin region. These investments span industry, infrastructure, and lifestyle, reinforcing the region's economic base and attracting population retention and renewal.

Recently Completed

- RegenAqua Macro-Algae Bioremediation Facility - \$8.3 million
- Ayr Industrial Estate Expansion (Stage 1 – release 25 lots) - \$10.0 million

**Total Construction Cost
= \$18.3 million**

Under Construction

- South Ayr Filtration Plant Construction and Borefield Rejuvenation Works - \$54.9 million

**Total Construction Cost
= \$54.9 million**



Priority project – a pipeline of opportunity

Tourism



- Burdekin Cascades Caravan Park - \$650,000
- Lynch and Wunjunga Beach Masterplan - \$50,000
- Charlie's Hill Signage and seating - \$100,000
- Burdekin Tourism Strategy - \$50,000

Education, Youth and Workforce Development



- Burdekin Country Universities Centre - \$2 million
- Burdekin Shire Youth Initiatives
- Upgrade TAFE

Transport, Connectivity and Industry



- Ayr Industrial Estate Second Access - \$4.4 million
- Extension of Chippendale Street and Craig Street to the Bruce Highway - \$2.2 million
- Ayr Aerodrome Master Plan - \$50,000
- Plantation Park Crossing Infrastructure- \$30.0 million
- Burdekin River Bridge Second Crossing

Housing Activation



- Chippendale Street and Beach Road Residential Planning - \$550,000
- Burdekin Local Housing Action Plan

Community Safety and Lifestyle



- Camera Surveillance Asset Expansion - \$210,000

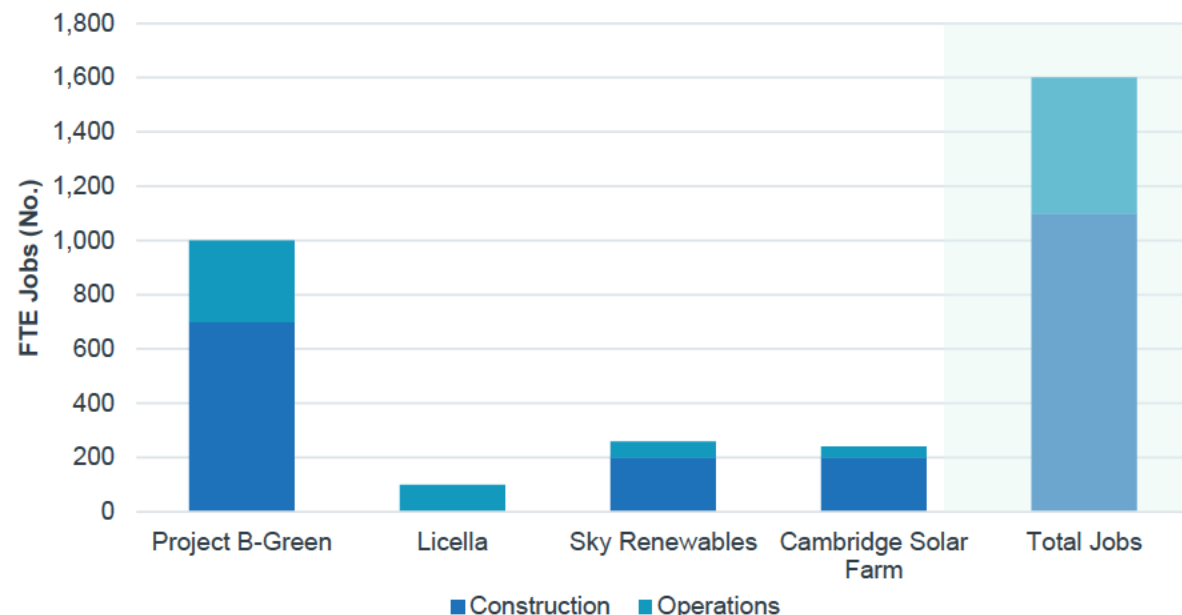
Burdekin's current pipeline of priority projects represents **more than \$40 million** in targeted investment, spanning tourism, education, transport, housing and community infrastructure. This level of coordinated planning and advocacy underscores the region's strategic growth agenda.

Potential Projects

Long known for the production of sugar, the Burdekin region is embracing innovative ideas, crops and products to grow the local economy.

The following projects are currently being investigated.

- **Project B-Green (Renewable Fuels):** A large-scale biorefinery converting sugarcane into sustainable aviation fuel and bioplastics.
- **Licella (Renewable Fuels):** A biofuel innovation project trialling hydrothermal liquefaction of sugarcane waste to produce renewable marine and aviation fuels.
- **Sky Renewables:** A proposed pelleting plant using sugarcane residues to manufacture biomass fuel for export.
- **Industrial Hemp:** A trial initiative exploring whole-of-plant hemp processing for fibre, food and industrial use.
- **Cambridge Solar Farm:** A 300MW solar farm planned for Upper Haughton, expected to deliver clean energy.
- **Burdekin Salt & Minerals:** Extraction of high-quality salt products via a low footprint bore field and processing facility.



Note: Employment estimates are not available for the Industrial Hemp and Burdekin Salt & Minerals projects.
Source: Burdekin Shire Council.

Combined, these projects are projected to deliver:

- Construction FTE: 1,100+
- Operational FTE: 500+

At 1 job per household and 2.3 people per household, these 500 local operational jobs will support over 1,000 residents.



Our Sugar Industry

Expansion & Regional Significance

Economic Significance

Sugar is an established industry driving growth

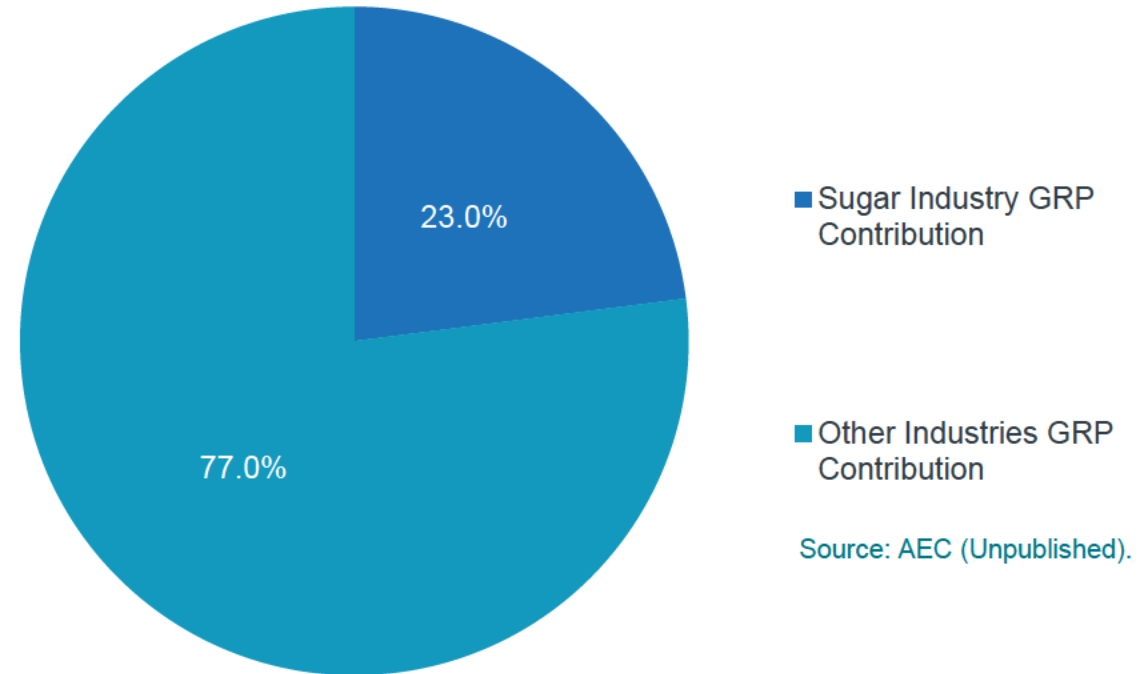
Sugarcane farming and associated manufacturing are the dominant economic drivers of the Burdekin LGA. In the 2024 sugarcane season alone, over 8.0 million tonnes of cane were crushed (Wilmar, 2025). A scale unmatched anywhere else in Queensland.

In 2023-24, the sugar industry was estimated to contribute \$352.9 million directly to the region's Gross Regional Product¹, representing 23% of the entire Burdekin economy. It is also a major local employer, supporting an estimated 2,314 direct full-time jobs across farming, logistics, milling and services (AEC, unpublished). Since 2020-21, the industry has grown at an average rate of 5.6% per annum. This is a clear sign of its sustained strength and resilience.

This is not a legacy industry but a modern, competitive and growing economic engine. Its impact extends beyond Burdekin, anchoring Queensland's export earnings, food security and renewable energy transition.

Retaining the current Burdekin electorate ensures this strategically significant and economically integrated industry continues to be represented by those who understand its value and its future.

¹ Estimated based on the industries of sugar and confectionery manufacturing and other agriculture. Calculated by AEC, assuming a proportion of other agriculture based on the value sugarcane production vs other agriculture from the 2021 census. This proportion was applied to industry output, employment, wages and salaries, gross operating surplus and taxes.



Meeting global demand for sugar

Our region is key to supporting a growth in sugar demand

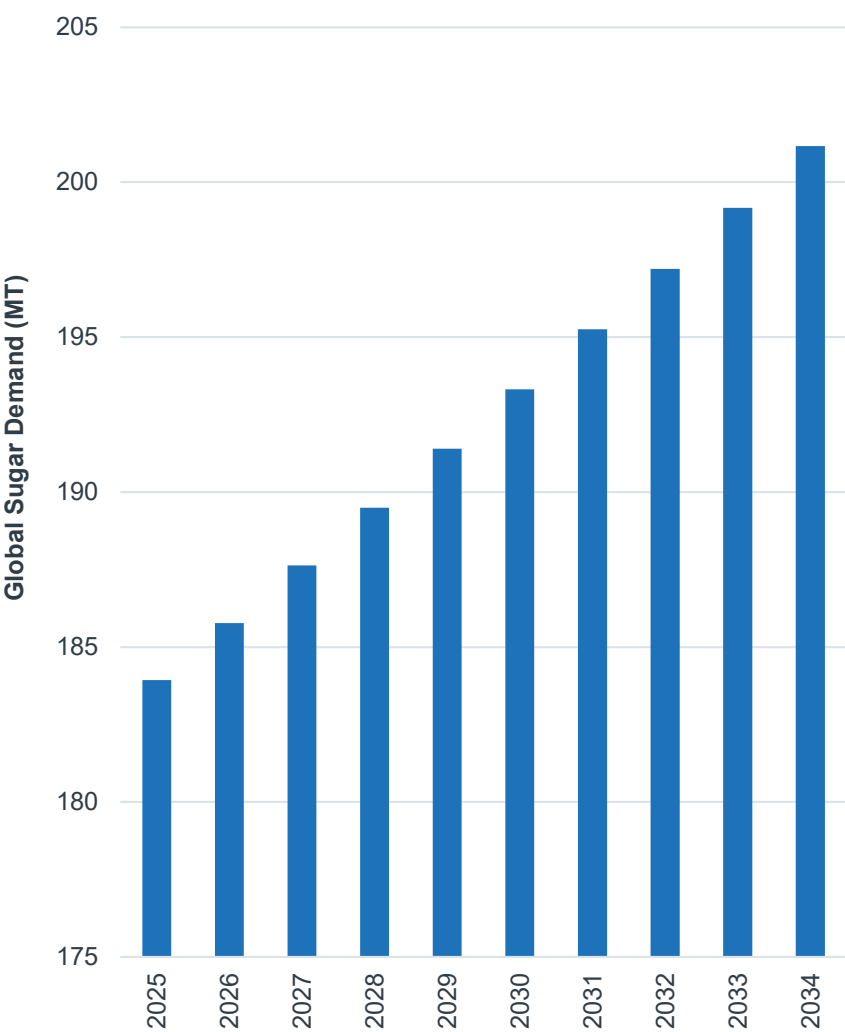
The global demand for sugar is driven by several key factors, with increasing consumption of confectionery products being the primary driver. Rising standards of living and increasing purchasing power in emerging economies have led to a higher demand for processed foods containing sugar (EMR, 2025).

In 2024, global sugar production reached 182.1 million tonnes. This is expected to rise by 19.1 million tonnes, reaching 201.2 million tonnes by 2034, reflecting the growing demand for sugar-based products.

Beyond food, sugarcane is becoming a key input in the global energy transition. By-products from sugar processing are increasingly used to produce biofuels, a clean, renewable fuel supporting decarbonisation efforts. As the world moves away from fossil fuels, sugarcane’s dual role as a food and energy crop is expanding its economic value.

As these dynamics continue to evolve, the global sugar market is set to experience steady growth, driven by the dual demands of the food and beverage industry and the biofuel sector (EMR, 2025).

This global context matters for Burdekin. As Australia’s largest cane-growing region, Burdekin is uniquely positioned to help meet this rising demand.



Source: EMR (2025).

Burdekin's role in Queensland's biofuel industry

Pioneering the future of clean energy from sugarcane

The Burdekin is emerging as a key contributor to Queensland's bioenergy future, using its agricultural strengths to support renewable fuel production at scale. Sugarcane biomass, once considered waste, is now a valuable input for next-generation fuels like sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and marine biofuel.

Several advanced biofuel projects are currently being investigated in the region. These are not speculative, blue-sky ideas, they are real, job-generating projects with local, national and global relevance. They represent a new value stream for Burdekin growers and position the region at the forefront of the state's transition to a clean energy economy.

Notably, Jet Zero Australia and LanzaJet have signed an agreement to develop a first-of-its-kind commercial-scale SAF and renewable diesel facility capable of producing up to 113 million litres annually. The project will be located in neighbouring Townsville and will directly utilise sugarcane by-products from the Burdekin, reinforcing the region's strategic role in powering low-emission transport solutions (DSDIP 2024, Jet Zero 2025).

Fragmenting this innovation-ready region risks weakening its representation at a time of significant economic and technological transformation.





Our Regional Identity

More than a boundary

We are one region and should remain one electorate

More than a name, it's a regional identity

The name Burdekin carries real meaning. It gives the region visibility, cohesion and pride and ensures it is recognised at the State and Federal level. Changes to the electorate would weaken that shared identity disconnect our voice from the place it represents.

A socially connected community

Residents live, work, learn and participate across the region. Shared infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, sporting clubs and emergency services, binds our towns together

An economically integrated region

Burdekin's agriculture, particularly sugarcane, relies on region-wide supply chain coordination: shared mills, transport corridors and seasonal workforces. These cross-community connections require unified representation.

One geography, one voice

Rivers, floodplains and ranges define how people travel, interact and live in the Burdekin. The current electorate respects these natural features. Any redrawing risks ignoring the geography that shapes our region.

Change would increase distance, not connection

Burdekin is already a vast rural electorate. Expanding it into more remote areas would make it harder for people to access services and harder for their local MP to represent them effectively. Redrawing boundaries risks creating distance, not connection.

Preserve our voice, don't dilute it

Fragmenting the Burdekin would dilute the voice of rural North Queenslanders. At a time when our industries and regions are stepping up, our representation must stay strong, not be carved up to fix urban growth.

Keeping the Burdekin electorate whole means keeping its voice strong and protecting the unity that has underpinned its economy, identity and resilience for generations.

A photograph of two children playing on a large, colorful playground structure. The structure is covered in a pattern of yellow and green oval shapes on a dark blue background. A young boy in a white shirt and blue shorts stands on the left, looking towards the right. A young girl in a white tank top is on the right, smiling and looking towards the boy. The background shows a park setting with trees and a fence.

Our Ask

Retain our electorate

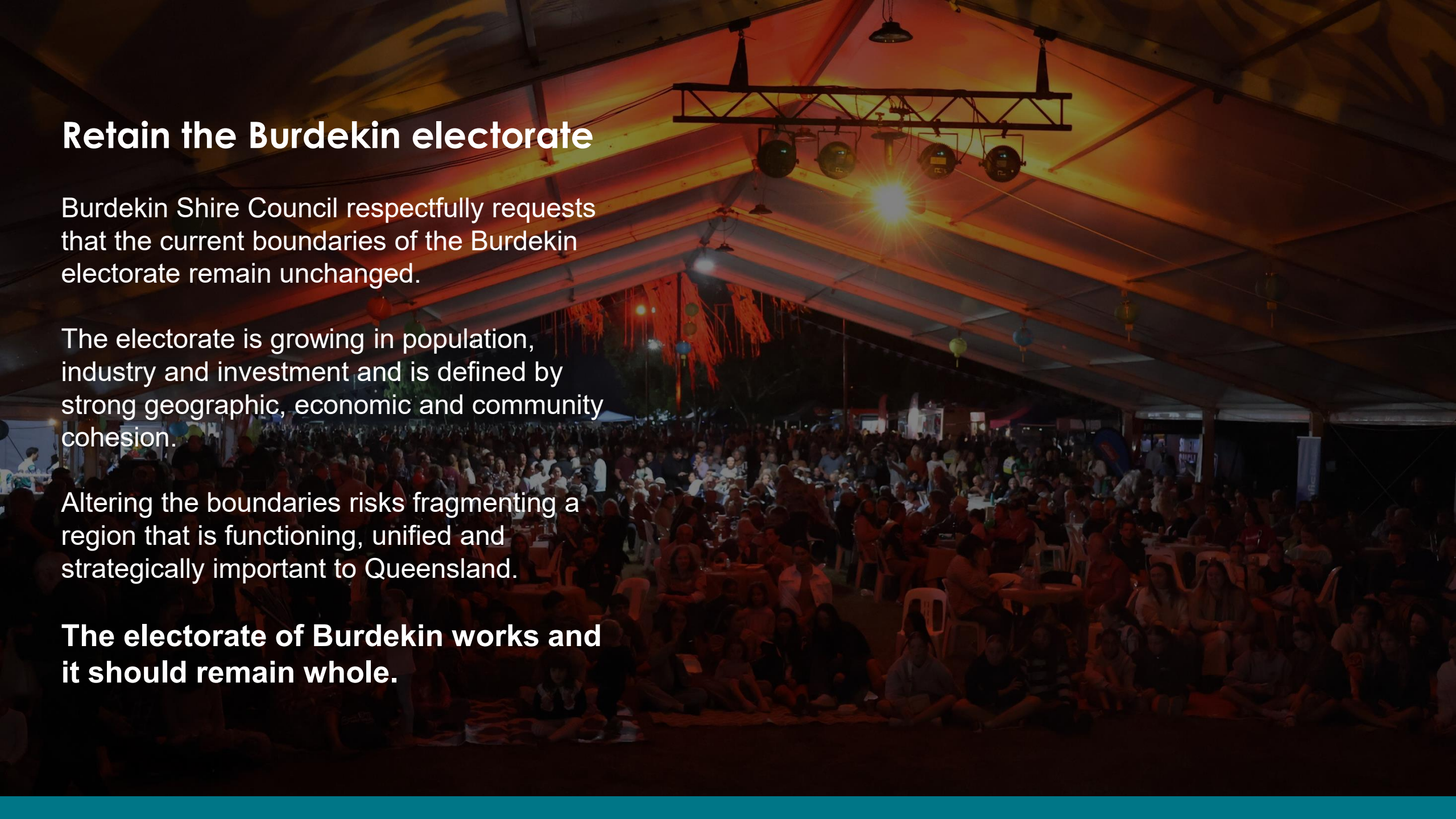
Retain the Burdekin electorate

Burdekin Shire Council respectfully requests that the current boundaries of the Burdekin electorate remain unchanged.

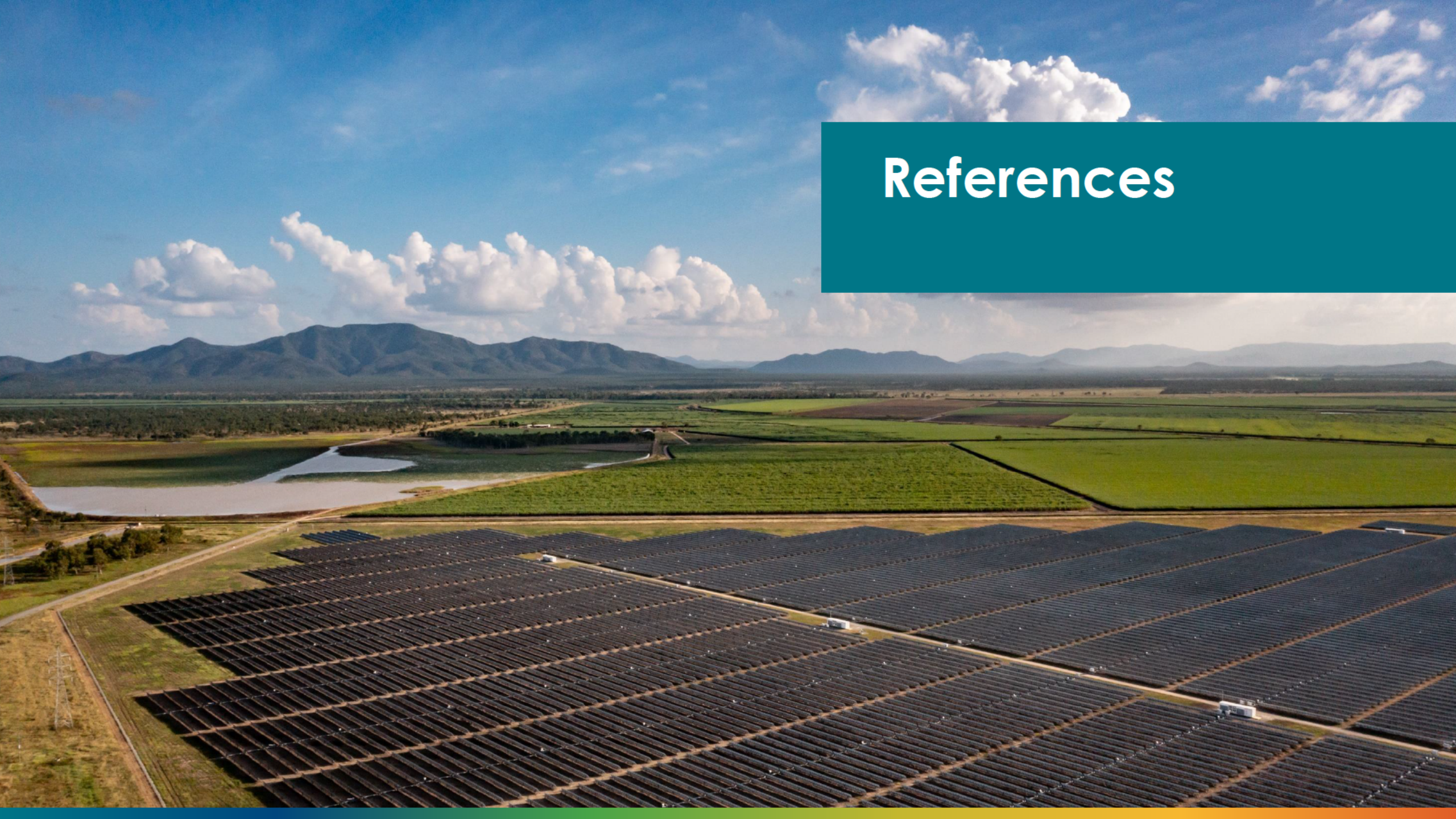
The electorate is growing in population, industry and investment and is defined by strong geographic, economic and community cohesion.

Altering the boundaries risks fragmenting a region that is functioning, unified and strategically important to Queensland.

The electorate of Burdekin works and it should remain whole.



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